

Advent 2024

Volume 15, Issue 6

Our worship services are livestreamed on our YouTube channel: upcbgm.org/youtube

Christmas Eve worship service

Tuesday, December 24 at 4:00pm

Christmas truly is the most wonderful time of the year. We hope you will join us for our family-friendly service of carols and candlelight on Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24 at 4pm. You can attend in person, join us online via our YouTube Channel upcbgm.org/youtube or Zoom upcbgm.org/zoom, or join over the phone by calling **646-558-8656** and then enter Meeting ID **865 274 8433**. The service can also be viewed later on our YouTube Channel.



Image: "Star of Bethlehem" by Hannah Garrity. Inspired by Matthew 2:1-12. Acrylic painting with mixed media on canvas. © A Sanctified Art | sanctifiedart.org



Worship Theme for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany: "Words for the Beginning"

Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year rushes in. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving – and yet, we feel the weight of many things coming to an end. What are the words that we will carry, and will carry us, that we bring

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Our mission is to follow Jesus Christ by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Everyone is welcome here



UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON

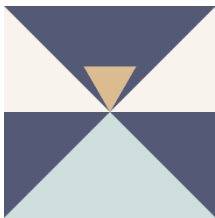


from the ending of one season into the next? In a world full of endings, how do we continue to hold out the promise of hope to a weary world?

As we move through new personal and political chapters, may these words for the beginning renew us and remind us of the ways we are called to live out our faith. No matter what you are facing, no matter what this new day brings, let love be your beginning.

December 1: The First Sunday in Advent — *You Are a Blessing*

Focus text: Luke 1:26–38

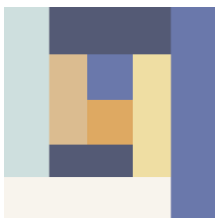


Mary is described as “blessed among women” (Luke 1:28). She is neither wealthy nor powerful, and yet she is chosen to bear God’s child. Her story begins with blessedness, and so does ours, for the prophet Isaiah declares that we are claimed by a God who calls our name. We are a blessing because we belong to God. When blessedness is our beginning, we begin to see the world — and others — through the eyes of a God who says: “You are precious in my sight” (Isaiah 43:4).

This quilt square is a simplified abstract image of the angel Gabriel.

December 8: The Second Sunday in Advent — *We Can’t Go Alone*

Focus text: Luke 1:39–45



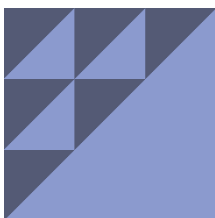
Mary hears the words of the angel and agrees to be God’s partner in bringing Jesus into the world. But she turns immediately from her angelic encounter to her earthly community, traveling to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is also expecting a baby. Together they support each other and celebrate with each other, caring for each other in the long weeks of preparation and giving each other strength for the journey ahead.

When God calls us to work for new life and new hope, God also calls us into community with each other. We are not alone, and we do not have to journey by ourselves. God brings unlikely people together, and forms us into a covenant community.

This quilt square is called a “log cabin”, and is meant to symbolize that together we can hold one another up and make something greater.

December 15: The Third Sunday in Advent — *Hope is Worth the Risk!*

Focus text: Luke 1:46–55



Hope is vulnerable and can feel like a tremendous risk, especially if you’ve experienced loss or trauma. But Mary shows us a resilient hope that takes risks — she risks her body to bear a son who will become the hope of her people. Through the ages, people have chosen to hope for a transformed world, and to act in ways that can bring about change. It can feel safer and easier to be a cynic, but the world doesn’t need more cynics. It needs people who say, “It can be better” and make it so.

This traditional quilt square design is called “birds in the air”. Sometimes when we take a risk, hope takes flight. At times it may feel like you’re falling, but you’ll find that, in God’s embrace, you are flying.

December 22: The Fourth Sunday in Advent – Don't Forget to Share the Joy!

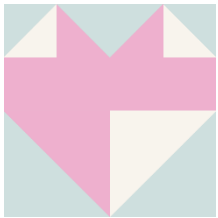


The birth of Christ brings good news of great joy to all people, which is cause for celebration. On this Sunday before Christmas, we invite everyone to share the joy by participating with us in our "Come as You Are Christmas Pageant". You get to choose which role you want to play in the pageant, and simple costumes and props will be supplied (it will be okay if we have lots of Marys or only a couple of shepherds).

Narrators will invite the players to come forward when it's time. We'll sing lots of carols, and have a joyful, informal service of celebration as we tell again the great good news of God-With-Us!

From a center point, tulip-like flowers stretch and bloom, referencing the Ralph Waldo Emerson quote, "The Earth laughs in flowers."

December 24: Christmas Eve – Love Knows Your Name Candlelight Communion service, 4:00pm



Christ's birth makes the vastness of God personal. The God who made the seas and the stars is also the God who made your beautiful hair and striking eyes. The God of creation takes on flesh, which means you are fully known. When the angels visit the shepherds in the fields, their message is global but also personal: "To you ... a savior is born." This birth is good news for everyone, especially those who are ignored or disenfranchised. On this night, God is born, and this God of love knows your name.

The love of God is represented by a heart with three triangles that seem to fold inward, ready for embrace.

December 29: The Sunday after Christmas – Blessed to Be a Blessing

Focus text: Luke 2:21-40

Mary and Joseph celebrate the birth of Jesus first by giving him his name in their community – inviting everyone to share the joy in a formal ceremony. Then they take the baby on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to introduce him at the Temple. There he is enrolled in the temple, and given a blessing by two elders – Simeon, a devout man, and Anna, called a prophet. They welcome Jesus and bless him for service to God and to the community. We remember the blessing that children bring to our community, and we ask God to bless them with strength and wisdom and holy favor as they grow in our midst.

This quilt square collage shows the ripple effect of joy dancing throughout all creation.

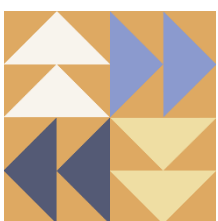


Image: "Let All Creation Dance" by Lisle Gwynn Garrity. Inspired by Luke 2:10, Matthew 2:10, Isaiah 9:2-3, Psalm 148, Isaiah 55:12-13. Ink dyes and gold resist on silk, with digital collage.

© A Sanctified Art | sanctifiedart.org

January 5: Epiphany Sunday – The Road Isn't Straight

Focus text: Matthew 2:1-12

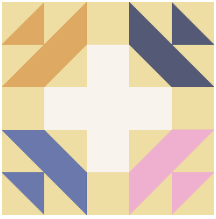


Too often, we've been told that a successful life is a linear one. But in reality, our lives unfold with many unexpected twists and turns. The Magi follow a star, embarking on a long journey in a foreign land in order to honor the newborn Christ. Instead of returning to Herod as commanded, they trust their dreams and go home by another way. Their road isn't straight, but God "makes a way in the wilderness" (Isaiah 43:19) as they follow their intuition and diverge from the expected path.

The triangles in this quilt square point in multiple directions. Much like the magi's journey, the path that lies ahead isn't always clear or straight. Thankfully, we have the guidance of the Spirit to light our way.

January 12: John the Baptist — *Do the Work That Is Yours to Do*

Focus text: Luke 3:7-16



As John the Baptist is teaching about bearing good fruit, the crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers ask him, “What, then, should we do?” His answer to each group is slightly different, but ultimately the same: “Do the good that is yours to do.” We can each bear good fruit through acts of justice and righteousness. We can all be what Isaiah calls “repairers of the breach” by satisfying the needs of the afflicted.

We are each uniquely gifted, called, and equipped for the work that is ours to do in the world. In the center is the cross, symbolizing Christ’s impact, and surrounding it are individuals reaching out and shining their particular light in the world.

Pastors’ Ponderings



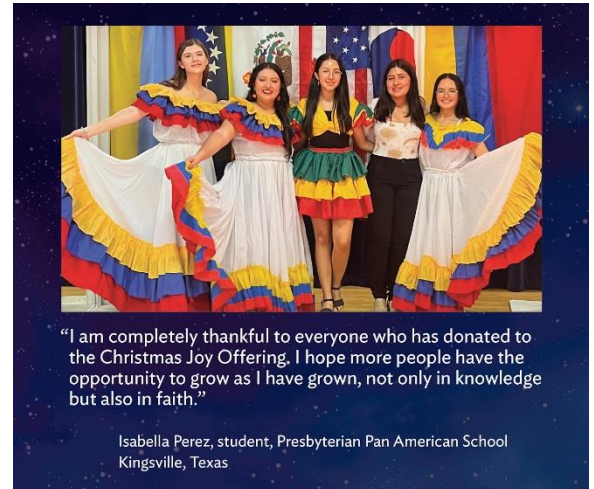
For those of us who gather in Advent expectation, we know that the only perfect gift ever given was the one we received in Jesus Christ. Finding that perfect gift is hard, often laborious work. Many of us seriously worry that our loved one won’t like the gift, or they might find the gift to be unsatisfactory — so much worry leading up to Christmas. Yet, our congregation knows that our collective gifts through the Christmas Joy Offering celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, the “perfect gift” from a gracious God. Indeed, there is only one perfect gift.

Think back on those people in your life who have truly developed your faith. It may be a pastor or Christian educator, a youth minister or Sunday school teacher. Devoted and caring leaders have led many of us in the way of Christ. Church workers have shaped our faith, and they have been God’s gifts among us. As we celebrate Christ’s coming and think of the profound impact these individuals have had on us, the Christmas Joy Offering provides a way for us to offer a gift in response, especially for those church workers who find themselves in times where they need assistance to pay bills or receive life-saving medical treatment. Our gifts



through the Christmas Joy Offering support these people who give so much of themselves to Christ's church.

Even as we support our current and former church leaders and their families, God is calling new leaders for our Church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color – including Menaul School in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Presbyterian Pan-American School in Kingsville, Texas; and Stillman College, a Historically Black College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Schools like these are sustained through the generosity of Presbyterians, which means a brighter future and enhanced opportunities for those students to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come. When you give to the Christmas Joy Offering, you help sustain these promises and uplift our siblings in Christ by reducing their burdens and opening new paths of opportunity.



Despite the worry and consternation of this busy season, we can never match God's perfect gift in Jesus, but through the Christmas Joy Offering, we can testify to who we have known God to be. Our perfect gift comes from above. Our gifts reflect our generous God. Our gifts support leaders in our Church and world – past, present and future.

You can contribute to the Christmas Joy Offering online at pcusa.org/christmasjoy or text CHRISTMASJOY to 91999, or send a check to the church office marked with "special offering" in the memo line.

Music Notes

Community Christmas Carol Sing

Friday, December 13, 5:30pm at UPC

Everyone is welcome at this community Christmas carol sing-along on Friday, December 13, starting at 5:30pm. We hope you'll join us for an evening of food, fellowship, and fun!

We invite you to bring a favorite snack or non-alcoholic beverage to share.

Instrumentalists are invited to bring their instruments and play along (music will be ready for "C" instruments, others will need to transpose as they play).

If you plan to attend and have any favorite songs that you want to make sure are included, you can email requests to us at office@upcbgm.org.



Upcoming Community Performances



The Binghamton Downtown Singers and Orchestra present Handel's "Messiah"

Saturday, December 14, 7pm

at Sarah Jane Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church, 308 Main St., Johnson City

Take a break from the hustle and bustle, and let the spirit of the holiday season envelope you. Please join us for the Downtown Singers' annual "Messiah" performance on Saturday, December 14, at our new performance time — 7:00pm. It is sure to truly be a night of beautiful music and inspiration for the soul.

General Admission tickets: \$20. One free student admission is allowed with the purchase of each full price General Admission ticket. Each student will need their own ticket.

downtownsingers.org

Advent/Christmas Jazz Vespers

Sunday, December 15, 4pm at Union Presbyterian Church, 200 E. Main St., Endicott

We are invited to join our friends at Union Pres for Christmas Jazz Vespers with the Presbybop Quintet as they bring syncopated dreams for peace and joy. Experience the sounds of the season with a spiritual swing, led by Presbyterian pastor and jazz pianist Bill Carter. Advent and Christmas seasonal favorites and some of Bill Carter's original arrangements will bring smiles and tapping feet.

An Owego native, Bill Carter serves as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. His Presbybop Jazz bands have recorded several albums including "Fragile Incarnation" and "Jazz Noel." His most recent recording "The Dancing Calvinist" includes the profoundly moving jazz requiem "Lux Aeterna." He is also the author of *Thriving on a Riff: Jazz and the Spiritual Life*, an inspiring and informative book which has received wide acclaim.

Playing with pianist Carter are Mike Carbone, sax, Jeff Stockham, trumpet, Tony Marino, bass, and Tom Killian on drums. Always a popular worship experience at Union Pres, this is a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend (or several!) to join you for Jazz Vespers.



Ensemble Intermezzo

Sunday, January 12, 3pm

at the Phelps Mansion Museum, 191 Court St., Binghamton

Inspired in their youths by Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts, the versatile musicians of Ensemble Intermezzo strive to share the experience of great music with all people. Their chamber music programs transcend any one stylistic category as they share their love and appreciation for music in all its varied genres. Complete sonatas by celebrated composers are interspersed with



Ruth Berry

engaging commentary and original settings of popular classics, jazz, folk music, spirituals, and music from stage and screen. The accomplished solo and collaborative musicians of Ensemble Intermezzo are pianist John Colonna, cellist Ruth Berry, and oboist Cathryn Jones.

\$28 General Admission

binghamtonphilharmonic.org

Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra presents "Little Symphonies"

Saturday, February 1, 3:30pm

at the Broome County Forum Theatre, 236 Washington St., Binghamton



Quinn Mason

Conductor: Daniel Hege

Béla Bartók: Romanian Folk Dances

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante

with Uli Speth, violin, and Victoria Miskolczy, viola

Quinn Mason: Petite Symphonie

Franz Schubert: Symphony No. 5

Tickets range in price from \$28 to \$69 (depending on seat). Kids 17 and under get in for free, courtesy of M&T Bank, our Symphonic Series Sponsor! Call the Box Office to request free kids' tickets: 607-723-3931.

Pre-Concert Chat, 2:30pm, Recital Hall: Dr. Julia Grella O'Connell, Director of Education and Community Engagement

binghamtonphilharmonic.org

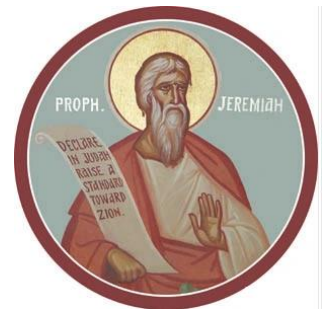
Southern Tier Singers' Collective presents "The Lamentations of Jeremiah"

Saturday, February 22, 7:30pm

at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, 9 Leroy St., Binghamton

The stunning Renaissance polyphony of Orlando Lassus presented in the cathedral-like setting of Binghamton's Saint Patrick's Church. The Lamentations of Jeremiah, written in 1584, comes to life in this exciting and contemplative performance. Free and open to the public with donations gratefully accepted.

southerntiersingers.org



Our Church Family

Join Us for Worship — in person, online, or over the phone

We worship together on Sundays at 10:00am, both in person in the sanctuary and online. The service is livestreamed on our public YouTube Channel upcbgm.org/youtube, our Zoom room upcbgm.org/zoom, and our website upcbgm.org, and is also accessible on YouTube any time. Those who can't access the worship videos online can call in on the phone to listen live on Sunday mornings, using the Zoom information listed below. So if you are not ready or able to come "in person", you are welcome to participate as you are able.

Everyone is invited to join us as we pray, hear God's word read and proclaimed, share our joys and concerns, and experience worshipful music.

If you're joining us in person, here's what you need to know:

- Air filtration units are deployed throughout the sanctuary to enhance your safety. If you have any symptoms of a potentially contagious illness, we ask that you put on a mask to protect those in our congregation who have compromised immune systems.
- Printed worship guides are placed by each door for you to pick up on the way in, and the hymns are printed in the worship guide.
- Offering plates are placed by the doors of the sanctuary, but we do not pass them during the offertory.

You are invited and welcome to use our online giving portal upcbgm.org/give or to mail a check to the church.

If you're worshipping with us online, all of the hymn music and prayer words are shown on the screen, and live captioning is used for other parts of the service such as the sermon and the Prayers of the People. If you watch on a small screen and need the printed version of the worship guide, it is available for download from our website upcbgm.org each week, or it can be mailed to you upon request if downloading & printing is not an option.

To join the Zoom room online, go to upcbgm.org/zoom

To call in: Dial **1-646-558-8656**, then enter Meeting ID: **865 274 8433 #**

It would be good to have you with us.

Music at UPC

Music is an important part of our coming together at United Presbyterian Church. We are excited to make music with every resource that we have, and to use a variety of styles — not all at once, but intermingled. What emerges is a vibrant worship service with music that includes everyone who wishes to participate.

UPC Choir: *Wednesdays, 6:30–7:30pm in the Music Room.* The vocal choir provides music for worship most every Sunday. We welcome new members at any time, and we would love to have your participation. It would be good to have you with us!



United Ringers handbell choir: *Sundays, 11:30am–12:30pm in the Sanctuary.* Our handbell choir plays 2–4 octaves of Malmark handbells and handchimes, providing music for worship about once a month. If you're interested in learning how to play handbells, please inquire. New members are always welcome! No previous experience needed. No auditions to start. If

Children in Worship *"Let the little children come to me..."* —Matthew 19:14

We are glad to have children and families in the congregation, and we welcome and encourage them to be in worship with us. We truly believe that a community of faith is made up of people of ALL ages. There is a PrayGround space with coloring sheets and quiet toys in the front of the sanctuary, which can be used there or taken to another pew if that is more suitable to the family's needs. Sunday school materials are mailed to our families once a month to do together at home.



There is also a nursery space at the end of the hall at the front of the sanctuary that is open for use with a parent or guardian. It has a changing table, a rocking chair, and some toys appropriate for children ages two and under. There is a speaker in the room so you can listen to the service. Please let us know if you have questions.

you can count to 4, you can learn to play!

We also invite instrumentalists and vocalists who'd like to share their gifts to talk with any of our music leaders about providing special music for worship — you can call the church office, email music@upcbgm.org, or speak with them in person after worship.

Donations Needed

Although we don't officially have a community "clothing closet", we do make donated items available during our weekly Community Pantry hours on Wednesdays. Right now we're in need of men's clothing, adult coats, and adult gloves.

We accept donations of new or gently used items — please don't donate items that have holes in them, broken zippers, or other damage. You can bring donations to the church office weekdays between 9am and 3pm, or contact Community Kitchen coordinator Sherry Conklin (meal@upcbgm.org or 607-722-4219 ext. 209) to make other arrangements.



Congregation directory — 2025 update

We're starting the process of updating our congregation's "Family & Friends Directory". Everyone is encouraged to provide a new photo of you (or your family), and to give us any updates to your addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. The photo does not need to be a "formal" portrait. It can be a candid photo or even a selfie. You can email the photo to the church office or text it to 607-218-4636. Or ask Scott to take a photo of you at church.

We also like to celebrate your birthdays! We publish the month & day in the directory and the newsletter, and our Card Committee sends out birthday cards as well. We don't need to know your year of birth if you don't want to share it — though it is helpful info for the Clerk of Session to have for our annual statistical reports to the PC(USA).

New information for the directory can be provided to the church office in writing or via email, or submitted via our website at upcbgm.org/directory. Please turn in your updates by **Tuesday, January 7, 2025**.

Session Highlights

by Andy Chadwick, Clerk of Session

While the last newsletter described a number of activities that Session is involved in, the list this time is significantly shorter. That doesn't mean Session hasn't been busy!

The primary focus of Session the past couple of months has been finances — specifically, developing the 2025 budget for UPC (we're almost there!). The costs of operating our facility and the programs we're involved in approaches \$1,000,000 a year! A sampling of costs includes facility operations (building maintenance and repair, utilities, personnel costs), our programming (worship and music, personnel costs), and our internal and external mission programs (Community Meal and Pantry, the Card Committee). Our staff are dedicated to their work, but it couldn't all happen without the support of the congregation!

In the process of preparing the budget, Session reviewed the Personnel Committee's updated Position Descriptions — what used to be called the Office Manager is now titled the Office and Technology Coordinator. Compensation recommendations were incorporated into the budget.

The Annual Congregational meeting to discuss the budget and renew our covenant with our pastors will take place February 2, 2025, following morning worship. More information will be distributed in advance of the meeting, once the last few remaining budget numbers are finalized. Mark your calendars! Your participation is vital to the ongoing life of the congregation!

Please don't hesitate to talk to any member of Session if you have questions or would like further information.

Let's Celebrate YOU and Each Other!

As Presbyterians, we know that fellowship and food are part of our DNA. With that in mind, and the assumption that most of us like cake, we're honoring birthdays once a month for all who were born that particular month.

"Birthday Sunday" celebrates with cake and other goodies, including gluten-free options. We gather in Fellowship Hall on the basement level following the 10 am worship service; we hope you'll watch the announcement insert in the worship guide for upcoming birthday Sundays. Please join us for "your" month and those of others so we can help fellow church family and friends begin their next 365-day journey around the sun in style.

If you'd like to help bring this bit of sunshine to our fellowship time, consider joining the Hospitality Team. In addition to Birthday Sunday, the Team helps plan and implement memorial service and funeral meals, special occasion snacks and other events. If you're interested in serving on the Team, or assisting the Team with specific things on an as-needed basis, please reach out to Sherry Conklin, Sally Hunt, Cindy Chadwick, or the church office.

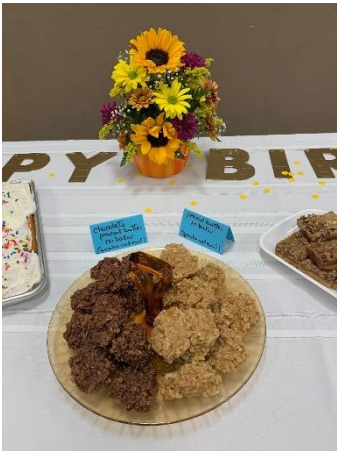
Hope to see you soon for sweets and treats, fun and fellowship.



Cake, anyone?



*Gluten-free options
are always available
on Birthday Sunday.*



A variety of treats await the congregation.



Sara Lieberman and Phil Westcott do the honors of blowing out the candles.



Sally Menges celebrates her November birthday on Birthday Sunday.

Renew, Revise, Refresh!

The Personnel Team has been busy this fall reviewing position descriptions for all jobs held by church staff. The years go by quickly, and some of the descriptions were indeed overdue for revision so that each one accurately reflects the positions at hand. For example, the COVID pandemic prompted the addition of several changes in job responsibilities based on how we manage the building, how we provide our community meal and food pantry services, the need to livestream our Sunday services, and the use of Zoom and other technologies. Changes in and additions to our music program also prompted some position description “refreshes”, as did the establishment of the UP Center in our building. While still a work in progress, all position descriptions are on target to be completed for January 2025.

Annual check-in meetings with individual staff members were also completed this fall, providing an opportunity for feedback. Additionally, the Personnel Team provided input to the Session regarding budget recommendations for the coming year.

The Team is pleased to assist with UPC employee-related matters, and welcomes your involvement. If you’re interested in helping, please contact Pastor Kimberly, Cindy Burger, Cindy Chadwick, or the church office.

No Email, No Social Media, No Texts



While technology has many advantages such as efficiency, speed, and the ability to communicate in short snippets, there’s nothing like receiving a message where pen met paper. There’s joy and a bit of excitement associated with special sentiments that were signed, sealed, stamped, and sent, found in the mailbox among catalogs, sales fliers, solicitations, and oh, yes — bills.

The Card Committee endorses the tradition of snail mail, and encourages you to let us know of birthdays, special occasions, deaths, joys, challenging times, concerns, illness and injuries, surgeries, retirements, graduations, new jobs, births, baptisms, anniversaries and any other situations where some words of celebration or encouragement might be welcomed by you or others. Please be sure we have your most recent contact information, which can be provided to the church office.

Connections are extremely important in our mission to support and strengthen our network of church family and friends by acknowledging life events. If you'd like to assist, please contact the church office or one of the members of the Card Committee (Cindy Chadwick, Margaret Davis, Jenni McKeage, Lana Ogden, Suzie Northrop Raboy, and Margaret Sands). Cards, return address labels, and postage are all provided.

Supporting Our Mission and Ministry

Online Giving: We are able to receive tax-deductible contributions online through our website (upcbgm.org/give). Contributions can be made by E-check or credit card, and can also be set up as a recurring gift.

We encourage you to lift up in prayer how God will use you to bless UPC in fulfilling our mission to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

Get Involved! Without any doubt, the ministry of our congregation depends largely on the dedication and selfless contributions of volunteers — the incredible individuals who give generously of their time, energy, and unique talents. Here are some ways you can help us do Christ's work in our community:

Community Meal & Pantry: Each Tuesday at 5pm, we offer a sit-down meal that is free for anybody, serving about 120 people a week. Volunteers are needed during the day on Monday and Tuesday to help with food preparation, and on Tuesday evening to serve the meal and clean up afterwards.

On Wednesdays from noon to 5pm, we run a free food pantry that also offers personal care & hygiene items when they're available. Volunteers help staff the pantry, and donations of non-perishable food and personal care items are always welcome.

Contact Kitchen Coordinator Sherry Conklin for more info: meal@upcbgm.org

Worship services: You may not have noticed how many people are involved in our Sunday morning worship services, but most weeks there are at least a dozen of us, and often there are more than 20: folks who read prayers and scripture, greet visitors, share musical talents, operate technology, set up refreshments, help serve communion, or contribute their ideas and support behind the scenes. If you'd like to take part, contact Worship Team chair Suzie Raboy or the church office: office@upcbgm.org

Other ministry teams: Our church teams are always welcoming new team members. If you'd like to help with or learn more about the workings of the church, talk to one of the pastors or the elders on Session: **Campus Ministry**, Pastor Becky; **Card Committee**, Margaret Davis; **Community Outreach**, Pastor Kimberly or Sherry Conklin; **Finance**, Andy Chadwick; **Hospitality**, Sally Hunt or Sherry Conklin; **Personnel**, Cindy Burger; **Property**, Pastor Becky; **Sewing Group**, Cindy Burger.

Programs & Events

Volunteering: The Balance Between Doing and Being

Sunday, December 15, 12-1pm

at the Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Binghamton, 183 Riverside Dr.

Join Dr. Francis Battisti as he takes you on a journey of exploring the concept of volunteering, embodying the balance between being and doing. As we seek to balance our life, we may want to explore the connection between the actions we take to have impact and our inner world of connection and compassion.



"It is not enough to be compassionate. You must act! ~the Dalai Lama

Free and open to the public. uubinghamton.org

Find the holidays difficult? "Coping with Christmas": Reflective Writing and Discussion Zoom Sessions

Monday, December 16, 10am-12pm, or Thursday, December 19, 6-8pm

Our neighbors in the Presbytery of Geneva invite us to join in a time of expressive writing. These sessions are being offered as writing workshops using the AWA Method. Participants will complete short writing exercises and then share their work with the group, allowing the group members to provide feedback on the piece. This approach allows everyone the opportunity to express themselves in a safe, inclusive environment.

For more info about this approach to writing, see: amherstwriters.org/what-to-expect

Monday 12/16, 10am: Meeting ID 897 8088 0609, Passcode 410057

Thursday 12/19, 6pm: Meeting ID 829 4662 3774, Passcode 143894

Connecting the Dots between the Waste Crisis and the Climate Crisis

Saturday, January 11, 11am

a Presbyterians for Earth Care webinar

Our own Elder Chris Burger will lead this program exploring how addressing the waste crisis helps in addressing the climate crisis. The program will also present implications for individuals and families.



Having worked in both the energy field as well as the field of recycling and zero waste, Chris is well-positioned to talk about the interconnections between the two. He established a Community Recycling Center in 1973. In 1977, he developed the first Weatherization program in the United States. In 1985, he developed our County-wide recycling program. He has co-founded and/or led a number of organizations focused on sustainability, including a Cornell University think-tank on sustainability (Eco-Justice Project) and the New York Sustainable Business Council. He is a member of Rotary International's Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG). He also walks the talk: he and his family have lived as a zero-waste household since 1992, and he designed and built a home that has been fossil-fuel-free since 1998. Known worldwide, he gives talks and workshops on both zero waste and how to wean ourselves off fossil fuels. Chris currently serves as Co-Stated Clerk for the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley.

The Zoom meeting link is not yet available. To receive a notification when it becomes available, contact the church office.

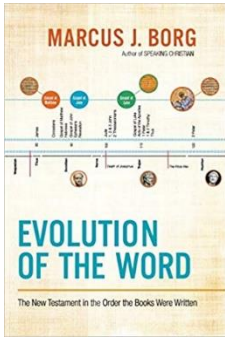
UPC's "Zoom room"

Modern technology is marvelous! Thanks to the Zoom meetings system, we can gather virtually even when it's difficult to be together in person. We've used our "Zoom room" for worship but also for prayer groups, book studies, hymn sings, and social times.

You can join our meetings and worship services online via your computer, tablet, or mobile device by going to <https://upcbgm.org/zoom>. If you've never used Zoom before, you'll be prompted to download the Zoom meetings app, which will ask for permission to use your microphone and your camera. We use our "Personal Meeting ID" for worship and most of our programs, so they're always in the same familiar place.

You can also call in over the phone, if you don't have a microphone on your device or you can't join online. To join as a phone call, dial **1-646-558-8656**, then enter our Meeting ID: **865 274 8433 #**

If you have questions or need help using Zoom, feel free to call the church office for assistance.



Bible Study

Mondays, 1-2pm, in the Upper Lounge or the Zoom room

We've been reading from Marcus Borg's *Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written*. Everyone is welcome to join us in person or on Zoom.

The general format is to read the introductory material for each section, then to read through the Biblical texts and talk about what it meant for early Christians and what it might mean for us today. We try to discipline ourselves to keeping the conversation to an hour every week.

UPC Sewing Group

Wednesdays, 10am-1pm in the Upper Lounge, with Zoom lunch hour at 12pm

Bundles of Blessings

Every Wednesday from 10am to 1pm, the UPC Sewing Group meets in the Upper Lounge to design, cut, sew, tie, and hem quilts. Ellen Hancock-Berti is our expert creator of bags for walkers, which conveniently help recipients carry necessary items on their walkers hands-free. Over the years, hundreds of quilts have been provided to those in need in the community and beyond, to new babies in our church family, and to those needing a little extra comfort. The quilts, combined with dozens of walker bags, hats, mittens, and scarves, have helped a variety of organizations in our area.

The group continues to bring much to the mission of UPC by enhancing our internal and external church spirit and providing functional gifts to help others and spread kindness.

During our church service on Sunday, November 24, Pastors Kimberly and Becky blessed the bounty of quilts, carry bags for walkers, hats, mittens, and scarves that were designed and crafted throughout the year by the Wednesday Sewing Group. With this dedication, the next step is for the fruits of the group's labor to be prepared with bows and tags for delivery to area organizations during the Christmas holiday. Dozens of handmade items will go to those in need.

Now more than ever, we need YOU to help continue the tradition of this mission. Sewers, knitters, crocheters, non-sewers, and those willing to learn are invited. We hope to see you on Wednesdays, 10 am to 1 pm. At noon we enjoy lunch together (chips, tea, and cookies are provided); if you can't be there in person, we have a Zoom option to join us at lunch. If Wednesdays don't fit your schedule, projects can also be worked on at home.



Left: Sewing Group member Jean Hill, UPC Building Manager Eugene Favor, and Pastor Becky sort quilts in preparation for the blessing of the quilts. Right: Jean Hill and Pastor Becky are surrounded by beautiful handmade creations.



Left: Colorful quilts and walker carry bags were dedicated on Sunday, November 24.
Middle: Hats, mittens, and scarves are just some of the items crafted for distribution to the community.
Right: Functional items from the Sewing Group will bring warmth to the community.

Please join us so that next year we can once again fill the sanctuary with a beautiful, bountiful bevy of creations for our pastors to bless!

Zoom Happy hour

Friday evenings, 5-6pm

After more than four years of “Zooming” together, our weekly social-distance gathering is still going strong. Bring your own beverage, Zoom in, and join the fun as we catch up on the events of the week and share how we’re doing. It’s a great way to keep in touch with friends near and far.

Presbytery News

News from the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley

Our presbytery’s newsletter, “Thursday Thoughts” (susvalpresby.org/thursday-thoughts), is published every week and includes announcements from our partner congregations in the region, news from the PC(USA) denomination, and links to webinars & resources available to us through the presbytery.

Thursday Thoughts often announces classes and retreats offered by churches, seminaries, and other agencies, some in person and others online.

We are all invited to expand our understanding of the church and its mission through a broad variety of topics. Check it out, you might find something that sparks your interest.

Our Presbytery works busily throughout the year to live out its mission to serve and encourage congregations as we together seek to be faithful in our calling to Jesus Christ. Here are some highlights of the ministry that is being done in the presbytery:

Rev. Dr. Greg Garis, our Lead Presbyter for Transformation, has introduced a new Presbytery Prayer Calendar (susvalpresby.org/Prayer-Calendar) which runs from December 1, 2024, to November 23, 2025 (the Liturgical year), cycling through each of the various congregations of the presbytery, as well as the committees of the presbytery and the staff of the presbytery, synod, and offices of the General Assembly. We’re all encouraged to take some time each week to pray for our siblings in Christ.

The budget for 2025 was approved by the Presbytery Assembly in November, with expected expenses of \$378,499 next year. Nearly 30% of the budget will be funded by drawing on the Presbytery’s reserve



funds, while 22% is funded through Per Capita assessments and 10% comes from a grant provided by the Synod of the Northeast to support the Lead Presbyter position.

The presbytery will welcome a special guest in April, the Rev. Tony Larson, Co-Moderator of the PC(USA) General Assembly. Rev. Larson will lead worship at the Presbytery Assembly meeting on April 12, location to be determined.

New officers were elected for the Presbytery for the 2025 calendar year: Moderator, Rev. Paul Huh (Walton); Vice-Moderator, Elder Dorothy Troike (Cortland); Cabinet Chair, Rev. Dave Johnson (Cortland). Many people were elected to serve on committees and commissions of the Presbytery, but there are still several open seats. They're looking for female Ruling Elders to serve on the Cabinet, the Commission on Ministry (COM), and the Commission on Christian Leadership Formation; male Ruling Elders for COM, the Committee on Representation, and the Committee on Nominations; and additional members to serve on the Permanent Judicial Commission. If you're interested in learning more about the work of the Presbytery, contact the Co-Stated Clerks (Rev. Becky Kindig and Elder Chris Burger, both from UPC) at statedclerk@susvalpresby.org.

Presbyterians for Earth Care's 2024 Advent Daily Devotional

New daily Advent devotions based on the lectionary texts, viewed from Creation Care perspectives. PEC hopes this devotional will provide you with new insights on these beloved texts during this special season, and will inspire more people to help care for God's creation in these challenging times.



Available online in both English and Spanish: presbyearthcare.org/devotional-and-worship-aids

Frontier Fellowship

As part of God's mission to the world, Frontier Fellowship invites believing communities to engage people groups where the Good News of Jesus and his Kingdom is not yet known.

Frontier Fellowship has been and continues to be focused on going wider, deeper and farther with the Good News. Along with all our partners and mission colleagues, we are passionate about reaching the least-reached. This isn't just our passion; it's God's passion and the reason he sent Jesus, Immanuel (God with us).



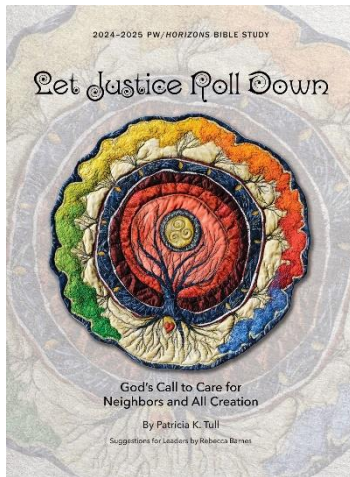
We hope this year's Advent Devotional, *Grace to Come* (frontierfellowship.com/media/advent-devotional-2024), will encourage and inspire you, your family and friends to set aside time to reflect on Jesus' presence throughout Scripture, throughout the ages and throughout the world. We also encourage you to read through our 2024 Christmas Gift Catalog, *When Grace Appears* (frontierfellowship.com/christmas-gift-catalog). Please take time to pray and consider how your contribution can help spread the news of God's love and grace, nurture frontier mission partnerships and make it possible for more people to be involved in making Jesus known.

Starting as a mission of the United Presbyterian Church of Portland, Oregon, for more than 40 years Frontier Fellowship has been following a call to engage the Church — inviting, educating, inspiring, gathering, and equipping followers of Jesus to embrace their God-given roles in making his name known among every nation, tribe, people, and language. Unreached people groups are ethno-linguistic communities with little or no access to the Gospel. Researchers estimate there are over two billion people from more than 6,500 unique groups in the world today who've never heard about Jesus. Learn more about Frontier Fellowship at frontierfellowship.com.

Monthly PC(USA) Book Study “Let Justice Roll Down: God’s Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation”

Fourth Sundays @ 7pm (Eastern) on Zoom

from Presbyterians for Earth Care and the Presbyterian Women organization



All are invited to join this virtual monthly book study — it’s not too late! Patricia K. Tull, author of *Let Justice Roll Down*, describes her call for creation justice in this way: “When I first learned of the climate crisis, I wondered how a biblical scholar with few practical skills could help and found my purpose in learning about ecology and teaching people of faith what I could. Such is not everyone’s skillset or desire, but each of us has something to do with all our hearts.” Learn about ecological systems, challenges we face in this time of accelerated climate change, possible ways to address the impact of human-made stress on our environment, and theological questions pointing to large & small ways to act and engage.

Go to presbyterianwomen.org/product/let-justice-roll-down-english-edition to order the book (\$10). Zoom link for monthly sessions: bit.ly/3ZHyWlt

Invitation to Apply to the Delegation to the UN’s 69th Commission on the Status of Women

March 10–21, 2025, in New York City

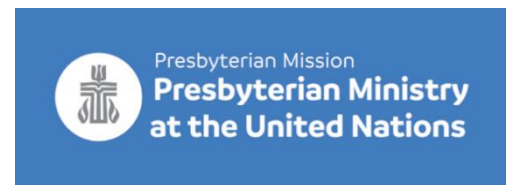
Greetings from the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations!

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), along with Presbyterian Women, will form a joint delegation to attend the UN’s 69th Commission on the Status of Women to be held **March 10–21, 2025** (unwomen.org). Although it is only December, our office is already busy preparing for next year’s Commission on the Status of Women which is held every March at the UN headquarters in New York City. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We are proud to be a part of this community of over 5,000 participants from around the world, including UN Member States, UN programs, agencies, and civil society who come together to further gender equity. The main focus of the sixty-ninth session will be on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

The review will include an assessment of current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (sdgs.un.org/2030agenda).

We are reaching out to you to nominate people from your presbyteries and synods to participate in CSW69. If you know anyone who would benefit from this learning and leadership opportunity, please have them fill out this application form before January 3rd, 2025: forms.gle/h1AeU8K8uMRRbwHg7. Due to high demand and limited spots, we recommend submitting the application before the deadline. Individuals selected as delegates should have some knowledge of or interest in the issues addressed by the 69th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In addition, efforts will be made to select a delegation that reflects the diversity of the PC(USA) including age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, and geographical distribution.



More information on CSW, expectations of delegates, the tentative schedule, and more can be found on the application form. In addition, here is an overview from CSW68 for a flavor of what CSW looks like each year: bit.ly/3ZMwJ0S.

We look forward to having delegates from your Mid Council join us here in New York in March! If you have any questions regarding CSW or the CSW application, please do not hesitate to reach out to Clare Balsan, our Advocacy Associate, by email (clare.balsan@pcusa.org) or phone (502-612-6130).

Grace and Peace,

Sue Rheem (she/her/hers)

Head of Office & Representative to the United Nations

Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations

presbyterianmission.org/ministries/un

“Have you heard our cries?”: Korea Peace Journey

October 14–23, 2025

from the PC(USA) Presbyterian Peace Network for Korea

On this journey, people of faith will get to “hear the cries” of the Korean people, who have been divided and at war for over 70 years. Participants will learn about the barriers to peace that the United States and others have erected and maintained, and the efforts of peacemakers across the Pacific to overcome them.

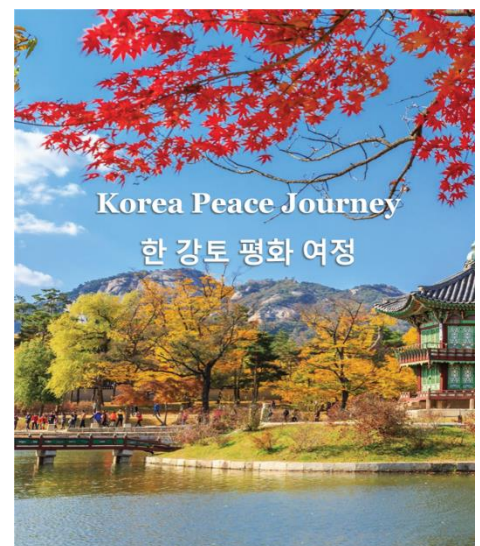
Led by PC(USA) mission co-workers Kurt Esslinger and Unzu Lee, the journey will visit Seoul, the Demilitarized Zone, Jeju Island, and PyeongTaek. It will build connections between Christians in Korea who are working for peace and peace-loving Presbyterians and others in the U.S., enhancing the capability of all of us to promote peace on the Korean peninsula.

Participants and their counterparts in Korea will worship together, meet with persons impacted by past and continuing violence, and engage in discussion about how Christ might be drawing them and their faith communities together in action for peace.

Registration will begin March 1 and is limited to 25 people. Total cost: \$2,500 + airfare.

From the PSV, Rev. Paul Huh (pastorpaul@waltonup.org) and Rev. Earl Arnold (EarlBArnold@gmail.com) plan to take part in this peace journey, and would be happy to tell you more about the trip.

For more info, contact peacenetworkforkorea@gmail.com or call 562-447-3575.



Practical Resources for Churches

Practical Resources for Churches (prcli.org) is a resource that the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley's Commission on Ministry subscribes to so all congregations in our presbytery can access their programs. You're encouraged to check out all they have to offer and take advantage of the abundance of programs and information. Many of their programs and webinars are available at no charge to you through our paid subscription, and most of their webinars are recorded and available for later viewing if you missed attending it live.

They also have links to resources on a wide variety of topics including caring ministries, spiritual practices, small church life, social justice, and environmental stewardship. Other resources include:

- **What's Next** — A biweekly sharing of timely resources and upcoming webinars. The current (11/20/2024) letter is at conta.cc/3CBBJMN
- **Just One More Page** — A monthly book review blog. prcli.org/prc-book-review-blog

- **Cultivate: growing in faith** — Christian Education and faith formation resources, ideas, and anecdotes for adults, children, youth, families, and multigenerational ministry. The December 2024 letter is at bit.ly/4gknTwR

Joys and Concerns

Preparing to Wed: Andrew & Margaret; Emma & Jessica

Welcome to the World: Itamar Aharony-Karaso, born to Lianne and Asaf

Celebrating 63 years of marriage: Joyce & Bill

Gratitude: the community at UPC, the music, healing, joy of little ones, beauty of the season, Charity's new apartment

Traveling Mercies: holiday travelers, drivers on icy/snowy roads

Recovering from Surgery: Ann C, Maria K, Dave S, Alan, Bruce G, Gabe H, Marion A

For Healing: Nate, James, Bob, Lene, Helen, Martin, Carol, Joyce, Suzie, Linda, Claude, Bill

Grieving: Friends & Family of: Carmen Greco, David Raboy, Barbara Wheeler, Gustavo Guttierrez, Richard, Tanayjah Harris

Living with Cancer: Mary Ann, Molly, Leah, Suzy, Zeke, Pam, Joann, Danny, Charlie, Dave

Covid-19: Madelyn, Dean, Sands family, Judy, Kimberly



Ongoing: Evelyn, Felix, MacMyne family, Jean, Jimmy, Kristie, Scott N., Rachmani family, Jen, Carlos, Rupee J., Angela & Jazmine & family, Bob & Esther, Bernie

Other Concerns: We pray for

- Outcomes after the elections
- people with severe mental illness
- people who are housing-insecure
- people struggling with addictions
- migrants
- those affected by cartel violence in and around Sasabe, Mexico
- Turkey & Syria
- Ukraine & Russia
- Israel/Palestine
- Haiti

Recent & Upcoming Birthdays

December

- 2 Aoife Backus
- 3 Anne Boyer Cotten
- 9 Douglas Hill
- 10 Declan Jones
- 14 Linda Griffin
- 15 Chris Burger
- 17 Jessica Lane
- 19 Lee Day
Andrea Livingston
- 20 Isla Jones
- 25 Grace Hickey
- 27 Jon Morse
- 30 Nancy Walter
- 31 Peter Griffiths

January

- 3 Dave Schneider
- 9 Jackson Seman
- 10 Gabriel Hickey
- 11 Elikem Nyamuame
- 18 Suzanne Souza
- 20 Allison Nyamuame
- 27 David Jurena
- 29 Andrew Chadwick
Zackk Meade
- Tết (Vietnamese New Year):**
Cheryl Nguyen-Wishneski
Arianna Windsong
- 31 Harley Meade

February

- 1 Sarah Chadwick
- 4 Dave Davis
Elinor Hugenbruch
- 8 Jullian Wanjama
- 14 Pastor Kimberly
Peter Westcott
- 18 Jenni McKeage
- 19 Cathy Ciganek
- 26 Ron Glowacki
Emily Hugenbruch
- 27 Aaron Whitney



Everyone is welcome here

**UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BINGHAMTON**



42 Chenango Street • Binghamton, NY 13901 • www.upcbgm.org

☎ 607-722-4219 • ✉ office@upcbgm.org • 📘 UPCBinghamton

Address Service Requested

Mark your calendars!

The Annual Meeting Part 1 is scheduled for February 2 following the worship service

On Sunday, February 2, at 11:15am, we will gather to renew the covenant between the congregation and the pastors, to talk about the road ahead and look at our mission statement, and to consider all that God has done for us.

This meeting will be hybrid, immediately following the worship service, in the sanctuary and in the Zoom room upcbgm.org/zoom or via phone call (+1) 646-558-8656, Meeting ID 865 274 8433.

We renew the covenant between pastors and congregation every year by voting on their terms of call. "Terms of call" is the PC(USA) language for what, in the business community, is called a "compensation package". Recognizing that God's call to pastoral ministry is expressed in a three-way covenant between the presbytery, the congregation, and the pastor, each year you are asked to support the work of the pastors by agreeing to support them financially as well as through your prayers and participation. After the congregation votes, the terms will be sent to the presbytery for their approval.